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A LECTURE

ON THE

IMPORTANCE OF A CHRISTIAN BASIS

FOR THE

SCIENCE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY,

AND ITS APPLICATION TO

THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE.

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L E C T U R E .

POLITICAL ECONOMY professes to treat of the material wealth of nations, and to trace out the laws which govern and regulate its tendencies to increase or diminution. By material wealth, it would have us to understand not only the precious metals, as gold and silver, but all descriptions of property, having an exchangeable value. Whatever substance, whether in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, is consecrated to the use of mankind, by the expenditure of human capital, or human labor, passes, *ipso facto*, under the scientific dominion of Political Economy.

From this view it would seem, at first, impossible to take any adequate cognizance of a subject so vast, so complex, and so essentially variable. This is, indeed, to a great extent correct; and the science finds itself so often at fault, even on matters which it ought, by this time, to understand thoroughly, that he must be a credulous man, who places implicit confidence in even its most elaborate conclusions. Yet, on the other hand, it is the special province of all science to take up, and arrange, and analyze, distribute and classify, under general heads, the various subjects which it investigates; and no matter how complicated may seem to be the material affairs of wealth and industry, in the social relations of individuals, or in the great commercial business of nations, the science of Political Economy has reduced, from the patient study of details, certain leading principles, according to which it has distributed the whole subject into special departments, which simplify questions in a manner almost inconceivable. True it is, that the professors of the science are not always agreed, as to the accuracy of its classifications, or the soundness of its principles. True it is, that its votaries have yet to travel an immense distance, before they shall have reached

anything like infallibility. Nevertheless, it has already furnished most important results. The observations and statistics, which it has collected and arranged, are invaluable; not only on account of the points which they have elucidated, but also, and more, on account of the anomalies in social, as well as political, philosophy, which it has utterly failed to explain.

Of its two great primary departments, the one comprises the inhabitants of the earth; the other embraces the material things which are required, and can be supplied, for the physical sustenance or enjoyment of these inhabitants. Now, it is found that these material things, before they can be fully prepared for the purposes of sustenance and pleasure, require the expenditure of capital, either in money, or labor, or both. Such things are divided into two stages of time; the one commencing with the first expenditure of capital on the raw material, and ending at the term of expenditure, when the thing is entirely prepared, and passes over to its use. This comprehends all the industrial pursuits and occupations of mankind; and the whole is designated by the term *production*. The other stage begins when the object is applied to its use; and this stage is called by the general term *consumption*. The latter of these terms represents the wants, whether real or artificial, of society; the former designates the supply of these wants. Population is also classed under two corresponding divisions; namely, *producers* and *consumers*.

But in general, the science has, so far, been conducted rather in conformity to the special interests of particular nations, than according to any principles of universal origin or application. The countries which have paid most attention to this subject, in a scientific point of view, are France and England; and the works emanating from these countries, represent very distinctly, the national type, according to which the study has been prosecuted. Hence, although there are found in their treatises, principles supposed to be of universal application, still the actual condition of society, the nature of industrial pursuits, the bearing of commercial laws, peculiar to those countries, have come in so powerfully in modifying the views of their political economists, that their best principles cannot be appreciated, except by a just discrimination of all the circumstances, in which one nation differs from another.

Thus, for instance, confining our remarks to England, with which we are better acquainted, we are met with a distribution

of the population into classes, which are not formed in our own country. These are, landlords, capitalists, and laborers. Generally in this country, the same individual represents all three. He is the owner of the soil, which he cultivates ; and his means of carrying on agriculture, constitute his capital. The three classes are indeed, found ; but that which constitutes the rule in England, is only the exception here. It is not, perhaps, the fault of Political Economy, as a science, that it seems to regard wealth as the *end*, and human *beings* as only the *means*, in order for its attainment. We would not venture to make this a reproach ; and yet we cannot help making it a subject of regret. Its writers did not create the science ; they only embodied a copy of its workings in practical life, as they found it in the relations of men. The prominence which is given to wealth, in tracing out the most certain rules for the acquisition of it, cannot but have had an injurious moral effect, in so far as it enhanced the ideal value of riches in the estimation of the human mind. There perhaps never was a period, when men entered on the pursuit of wealth, with so much of what might be called almost desperate determination to succeed, as the period in which we live. And we may entertain a reasonable doubt, whether it be not owing to this, that individuals in high and honorable stations, have so frequently (and of late as never before,) jeopardized and sacrificed an unblemished character, rather than miss the opportunity of rapidly acquiring wealth ; the means of which, circumstances and confidence had placed within their reach. Cupidity is a natural propensity of man ; and it is to be feared that the theoretic, and practical, political economy of our age, has encouraged and whetted the passion instead of moderating and regulating its violence. It is certain, that self-interest is the great motive principle of human exertion ; but it is equally certain, that Political Economy, as a science, omits what would be essential in a true definition of man's interest. Of this we shall be convinced, if we examine the moral principle on which, whether in the practice of modern nations, or in the theory of writers, Political Economy is founded. If we follow it up to the mysterious link which connects it with the spiritual or moral world, in the breast of man, we shall find that it acts exclusively on that of personal interest. So much so indeed, that if England and France, and the nations of modern times, in general, instead of being Christians, or at least professing Christianity, were Heathens, it would still be almost unneces-

sary to change a single word in the actual Philosophy or ethics of Political Economy. Here, then, it is, that the importance of a Christian basis demands our attention. The advantages and disadvantage of position between Landlord and Tenant—between the Capitalist and the Laborer, are such, that if mere material self-interest alone be left to regulate their relations, it is easy to foresee that the weaker are liable to fall victims to the interests and power of the stronger. The truth of this proposition is manifest now, in the condition of England, where these relations are, and have been in existence for a long time. Now, if Christianity were admitted as an element in Political Economy, man—human nature—in consideration of the value which it has acquired by the Redemption, would be the first and principal object of solicitude, and all things else would be estimated by reference to this. Man's interest would be graduated on a scale proportioned to the whole of his nature, combining the spiritual with the corporeal; and the whole of his destiny, extending to eternity, as well as time. Then, indeed, self-interest thus understood, would constitute a principle sufficiently high and sufficiently ample to combine the acquisition of wealth, with sacred regard for the rights and privileges of human beings. But this is not the case. The landlords, capitalists, and laborers of England, are supposed to represent three great departments of capital; the one in territory—the other in money—and the third in muscular strength, or mechanical skill. Each is supposed to be free, and the only motive which is furnished in the present system, is that of individual advantage. But it happens necessarily, that what would be the advantage of one class, is directly opposed to the interests of another; and then each adhering to the common principle, it is clear that he or they who have most power to hold out, will be able to damage or destroy the antagonist interest of the other. The influences to be derived from a high and enlightened appreciation of human worth, according to the standard of revelation, seem to have been shut out from the practical and theoretic economy of modern nations. The interest of the body, in its relation with material wealth, limited, of course, to this present life, is the narrow and ignoble sphere within which political economy affects to move.

I must not proceed, however, with views of this kind, until I shall have anticipated an objection which has already, perhaps, arisen in your minds, in seeming refutation of what is here ad-

vanced. And this is, that the immense wealth, the wonderful power, and unequalled prosperity of England, as a nation, is a practical proof of the soundness of her Political Economy. Or, it may be that an assumption, which has often been proclaimed, has presented itself to your mind as a yet stronger refutation, namely : that the wealth of England, her power and prosperity are owing to her profession of the Protestant religion, and the play of those energies which that religion is supposed to foster and develop. Now, with the qualifications which will occur during the course of these remarks, I admit the truth of both these observations. That England is the wealthiest nation on the globe, is indisputable. But it is to be remarked, that this wealth is in the hands of a small portion of her inhabitants ; and we can form some idea of its amount from the fact, that we read of private individuals, whose annual income is not less than half a million of pounds sterling. That must, indeed, be a wealthy country, in which the income of a private gentleman, for a period of twelve months, would be sufficient to pay the salary of our President for nearly a hundred years ! But perhaps no stronger instance could be adduced, to show how unequally the wealth of England is distributed among its inhabitants, than such a case as this, contrasted with the hundreds of thousands and millions of the people, who are sunk and sinking under the combined evils of moral and physical destitution. Taking the population of the three kingdoms together, as constituting one political family, it will be found that there is no nation of the world, and above all no Christian nation, in which there is such an amount of poverty and wretchedness as in England.

She has, indeed, fought the great battle for wealth with other countries, and has, by universal consent, gained the victory. But how comes it that, while a few of her sons are rioting in the spoils of the vanquished, the cries of the wounded and dying of her own battalions, are heard on every side ? How comes it that, in Ireland, out of a population of between eight and nine millions, there are over two millions absolutely dependent on the charity of others, scarcely a degree above their own condition ? How comes it that, in Scotland, misery and destitution are hardly less general, and, from other causes, perhaps even more excruciating still ? How comes it that, in England itself, distress among the laboring classes presses, at intervals, to such an extreme point, as to threaten, from time to time, insurrection and revolution ? How comes it, in fine, to happen that, while the dogs of landlords and

capitalists are well fed and well housed—while their horses are daintily provided for, the sons and daughters of Britons around them go forth with gaunt looks and sunken features, through want of food? These are results which puzzle political economists, but which never could have happened, if Political Economy had not been transferred from the Christian basis on which it was originally reared in that country, to the inadequate foundations of mere individual interest. I am willing, then, to ascribe to the Protestant religion, the credit of England's wealth; but her poverty, and the destitution of her millions, must, I insist upon it, be charged to the same account. This, however, only in so far as these results have been brought about by the Political Economy of that country. Other causes may have contributed to both—such as the system of colonization and military conquest, in which England has been no less distinguished. Neither would I have it to be understood, that I regard the national character of the people of that country as differing essentially from that of other nations. If it be true, as some say it is, that, as a nation or as individuals, they are proverbially selfish, I do not ascribe it so much to any inherent deficiency of moral excellence or feeling, as I do to their system of Public Economy, which has so long prevailed, that it has gradually become, as it were, ingrained into the habits, principles, sentiments and associations of the people. Unfortunately, the same feelings, with the prevalence of the same system, are extending to other nations; and if they should continue, as appears quite likely, it may be difficult, at no distant day, to determine which will be entitled to preeminence on this score. There is, it is but just to add, perhaps no other nation in which there is a greater readiness to come to the relief of public distress, when it can be remedied, than in England. But the root of the disease is deep in the social condition of the country; and the highest effort of modern statesmen, political economists, and philanthropists, is to apply palliatives to the evils which it must produce, without daring to eradicate or disturb the principle from which they flow.

Let us, then, go back to the origin of this system, and trace its workings in connection with Political Economy, and we shall, perhaps, be able to discover the sources from which both the wealth and the poverty of England have been derived. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England, as a manufacturing country, had no preeminence, and was scarcely equal to France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. Up till that period, the profession of

the same religion had established, throughout all these nations, a certain type of uniformity, in reference to moral as well as religious questions, constituting a standard common to them all. This, however, did not interfere with the peculiar genius and national characteristics of each people. But, in reference more especially to certain social questions, such as the exercise of charity, making provision for the poor, seasons of religious observances, days of rest, and the like, the usages of the different nations approached sufficiently near to uniformity. England, as is known, broke away from this religious connection. The Christianity which she embraced in its stead was based upon an entirely different principle, as regards the social relations. The merit of good works was rejected, as an erroneous doctrine, and it was ascertained that salvation is by faith *alone*. This is not the time nor the place to inquire which of these two systems is true, in a theological point of view. But they are mentioned in contrast, as having been calculated to affect most seriously the social relations, especially in reference to the condition of the poor. Up to that period, the influence of the Christian religion on the hearts of the people was sufficient to provide, by voluntary contribution, for the necessities of the destitute; and it was a great safeguard for that unfortunate class, that the wealthy were under the conviction, right or wrong, of the importance and advantage to themselves, of doing good to their neighbor. When the universal belief was, that even "a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, should not be without its reward," the efforts and sacrifices made spontaneously, to remedy or provide against distress, could not have been regarded either as vain or unproductive expenditure of capital.

But another and more obvious result of the change was, in the increased production which England was enabled to bring forth, in consequence of having abolished the religious holidays of the ancient church. These, at that time, were little short in number of one day in each week. The original motive for their institution was not exclusively religious. Those days furnished seasons of rest for the serfs or slaves of the middle ages; and thus, by diminishing the profits of their lords, and furnishing themselves with such opportunities of education and moral elevation as the times afforded, prepared them gradually for the free condition. By abolishing them, England was enabled to present a production of nearly two months' labor, in each year, more than the other States, that still adhered to the ancient system. The consequence

of this was, that, by increasing the amount, she diminished the value, of her productions. Through this diminution in their value, she was enabled to undersell her rivals, first in all neutral foreign markets; and then, following up, with energy and perseverance, the advantages thus gained, she was enabled to undersell them in their own countries, and take possession of their own markets. Thus she began to drain other countries of their circulating medium, which became again a new instrument in developing still further the advantages of her position.

At first sight, it may appear to some that a circumstance, apparently so inadequate, is insufficient to have brought about such results. But we may illustrate its operation by an analogous case, on a small scale. All over this country there is a class of mechanics occupied in the manufacture of shoes. But there is in particular one village or town, in New England, that is celebrated for the number of its inhabitants, and the amount of capital, engaged in that branch of industry. Now, let us suppose that the people of that town find it consistent with their religious sense of duty, to add the labor of Sunday to that of the other days in each week. What will be the consequence, in regard to the other shoemakers throughout the country, who will still feel the obligation of sanctifying the Sabbath day? The consequence will be, that Lynn will be able to furnish shoes cheaper than they, and yet receive an equal amount of wages, though for a larger amount of labor. Her mechanics, therefore, can undersell their rivals elsewhere, on the principle well understood in political economy, that the increase of production is the cheapening of the value of labor. Suppose that each workman can produce a pair of shoes per day, the shoemaker of Lynn can sell seven pairs for the price of his week's toil, while those of his business, in other places, can sell but six for the same money; and as the buyer has in this, *his* advantage, he will purchase from the Lynn manufacturer rather than from the manufacturer of his own town. The money, consequently, expended for this article, will find its way to Lynn, and in a little time, together with the increased labor, will enable the manufacturers of that place to break down their rivals throughout the country. With this increase of capital the manufacturers of Lynn may, for a time, in order to supply the increasing demand for their article, afford to pay higher wages to their workmen; but the consequence will be, that, for sake of this wages, the number of workmen will be increased, and the

policy, when the supply shall have equalled the demand, will begin to react upon the workmen themselves, and lead to a reduction of their wages. In its course, however, that policy will have paralyzed or destroyed this branch of industry, wherever those who are engaged in it refuse to work on Sunday.*

Thus, precisely, has it happened in the history of manufactures in England, as compared with the other nations of Europe. The results of the entire national industry, during some forty or forty-five days in each year, gave her the first advantage over her rivals. This brought her capital, and drained from them their resources. It made her strong, and left them weak and exhausted. By means of capital she was enabled not only to increase the quantity, but also to improve the quality, of her productions, to a degree which they could not rival; and if, at different subsequent periods, they attempted to revive their manufactures, even by artificial means, British skill and British capital were prompt, even at a little sacrifice, if necessary, to effect their extinguishment. Thus, England became a monopolist in the market of nations—thus, their wealth flowed to her workshops—thus, competition was destroyed abroad; and the foundation laid at home for that superabundance of riches, by which she has been enabled to borrow from her own subjects almost the whole of her national debt, amounting to some eight hundred millions of pounds sterling. It is not pretended that this is the only cause of the great aggregate wealth of England; but so far as it comes under the head of Political Economy, it was one great cause, of which the comparative poverty of other European nations is as manifestly another consequence. Here, then, we see the principle of interest operating in its national form; and, thus concentrated, powerful enough to sustain England, in competition, against the world. But having been successful in putting down all foreign competition, how did this principle operate on the condition of its own

* It was the discovery of this advantage which prompted the propagators of the revolutionary doctrines in France to declaim, with such vehemence, against the religious festivals of that country. And, in the wildness of infidelity and materialism which characterized the Revolution itself, it was decreed that there should be one day of rest only after nine, instead of six days of labor. In like manner, now, at least, one of the results of the policy of England has been the abolition, in great part, of the ancient religious holidays, even in Catholic countries. And in France itself, it is a lamentable fact, that even the Lord's day is no longer kept holy, except by the truly religious portion of the country; but, as regards manufacturing industry, the works are continued without distinction of days.

inhabitants? The contest now is among those three classes, into which Political Economy is pleased to distribute her people. The interest of the manufacturer, as a capitalist, is in the profits of his production. When the markets are brisk and the demand great, he will make large returns by his investments. But still, if he can cheapen the cost of production, he will be increasing his profits on both sides. Hence the laborer must maintain his interest, against that of the capitalist. Both are free; and labor is a commodity liable to rise and fall, like every other thing, with the fluctuations of trade. But the position of the laborer is unfortunate, inasmuch as the interests of the capitalist must be provided for, before his can be reached. He may, indeed, refuse to work for less than fair wages; but no matter how just his pretensions, on that score, the hunger that stands at the portals of his dwelling, threatening both himself and his family, if he do not work, renders him perfectly unequal to the contest. He must give in; for the same policy which annihilated competition in other nations, employs that same competition at home, for the increase of profits by the reduction of wages, or even the occasional suspension of labor altogether. Add to this the introduction of machinery, within the last fifty years. It is estimated that the machinery of England, in the various departments of industrial production, is equal to the labor of a hundred millions of workmen. Besides, at the present time, almost every nation has, at length, been aroused to the subject of manufactures, and has come to the conclusion that it is wiser to encourage and employ its own laborers, than to spend the amount of money which such employment may cost in the purchase of British goods. If, then, we take the actual condition of the poorer classes of Great Britain, depending in a great measure on this kind of employment for the means of life, in connection with the rising manufactures of other States, and take in the future which statesmen ought to anticipate, it will appear doubtful whether, even in an economical point of view, the policy of England has not been a short-sighted policy after all.

Let us now turn to the condition of the agricultural laborers of Great Britain. One would suppose that *their* condition should be improved by the transition of so many, from their ranks, to those of manufacturing industry. But this is not the case; for, as a class, they are not so well off as they were several centuries ago. They cannot, at present, obtain for a day's wages more than one-fourth of the amount of food, which could be purchased for a

day's labor, up to the reign of Henry the Eighth. In an act, or rather, the preamble of an act passed in his reign, 1533, "beef, pork, mutton and veal" are mentioned as the ordinary "food of the poorer sort;" so that the agricultural laborers of the present day require to have three hundred per cent. *added* to their actual wages, in order to live as well as their predecessors did, three centuries ago! Here is an awful deterioration in their condition. A precarious, and, at best, a scanty supply of the cheapest, and consequently, poorest kind of food, is all they can now obtain in exchange or recompense for their incessant toil. And hence they are described and represented, in public and official documents, as on the verge of absolute pauperism. Why and how has all this come to happen? The question is the more startling, because, during this period, the aggregate wealth of the nation has increased many hundred fold. To my mind, however, the answer is simple. It has happened, because, during this period, the whole practical economy of the country has been transferred from the ancient basis, and left to be regulated on the exclusive principle of universal, material self-interest. It is all very fine, to talk, as *we* Americans do, of the "immense wealth of England;" and, as the English themselves do, of the "sturdy self-reliance and manly bearing of a British operative"—as contrasted with the humble deportment of corresponding classes in other European States. But Political Economy has not seen, or, seeing, has not dared to denounce the social blunder—the mockery of freedom—which are presented in the spectacle of the starving laborer maintaining a contest of competition with the bloated capitalist. Each, in that contest, is referred back to his own interest; and while the interest of the one is to increase, or at least not diminish, his capital: the interest of the other is simply to escape a death of starvation which is pressing on him.

If these remarks be deemed sufficient to explain *why* the condition of the laboring classes is so much deteriorated from former times, we may now proceed to explain *how* the thing has been brought about.

In order to do this, it will be necessary to recur briefly to the social condition of England antecedent to the change of religion in that country. Nothing is more true, than that a large portion of the wealth and of the real estate of the country, were in the hands of the clergy. The origin of their title was as just and as authentic as that of any other property in Europe. The wealth

which they possessed was the growth of time—the result of their own industry, economy, and the gradual increase in the value of their estates. The church, and its principles—or rather, the principle of Christianity, working out through the living agencies of the church—had become interwoven, to a certain extent, with all the relations of social life. It operated as an invisible bond, binding together the various ranks, classes, and conditions of the whole people; and correcting or reconciling the antagonism of mere material interests, by the influence of other interests relating to another world. It was as the cement in the social edifice. After the serfs of the middle ages had passed into the condition of tenants and free laborers, those who occupied or cultivated the lands of the monasteries and of the church, had kind and indulgent landlords to deal with. In fact, all this property, as to its advantages, belonged rather to the poor at large, than to those who were its nominal proprietors. The law of the church regulated its uses. Its revenues, by this law, were divided into three portions. The first was sacred to the maintenance of the poor; the second was appropriated to the repairs of the churches, and the improvement of ecclesiastical property. Out of the third, the clergy were entitled to their support; and if still there remained a surplus, this also was a charge on their conscience, as belonging to the poor. It is not pretended in these remarks, that this law was, in all cases, strictly observed. But yet, the absence of all destitution and suffering among the poor, except in seasons of famine, is a sufficient proof that it was substantially attended to; since we find that there was no other poor law needed in the country, except that of Him who said, “The poor you have always with you, and when you *will*, you can do good unto them.”

When the change of religion took place in England, the possession of those ecclesiastical estates, and this wealth, constituted perhaps the greatest *error* of the church. They excited the cupidity of the monarch and his parasites. And if monasteries were denounced as citadels of luxury, indolence, and crime—if celibacy was held up, as a variation from the law of God, and an injury to the welfare of the State, the motives of the declaimers against both are fairly liable to suspicion, when it is remembered, that the wealth of the assailed was to become the prey and patrimony of the assailant. The secular clergy were, with few exceptions, brought into the measures of the monarch. The inmates of the cloisters, male and female, were turned adrift on

the world, and added to the ranks of the destitute, whom they had hitherto been accustomed to relieve. The estates of the church were seized by the ancestors of many of the landlords and noble families, of the present day. The fathers and mothers of the poor in the religious communities of both sexes, that were scattered from point to point over the surface of England, were driven from their peaceful abodes, and their estates seized in the private right of private individuals. The consequence of all this was, that in less than half a century, there was not concern enough for the poor left remaining in the hearts of the people, to provide for their support, without the aid, or rather the coercion of an *act of Parliament*. This is the first instance in the annals of christian nations, in which the principles of religion were found insufficient to furnish a spontaneous provision for the destitute. The burthens of their support necessarily fell upon the occupants and cultivators of the soil. The lands of the church were rented out on the principle of the proprietors' interest, modified only by two considerations—one was the extent of competition among the applicants; and the other was, the amount of rent which might be exacted without depriving the tenants and their families of the means, at least necessary, for subsistence. Hence, weighty rents; and as the landlords were for the most part, the law makers also: hence too, in process of time, those statutes in favor of landlord interests, which in our days are familiarly known under the designation of corn laws. Does not every one see that all such legislation, whatever may be its other effects, must tend to diminish the wages of all the productive and laboring classes, by either diminishing the quantity, or raising the price, of bread? So that if you look to the relations thus created between the laborers of England and the other two classes into which political economists have divided the population, namely landlords and capitalists, it would seem as if the whole practical purpose of public economy has been to reduce the working people down to that condition in which Malthus has discovered what he calls the "natural standard of wages"—which means, perhaps, a little more than is barely sufficient to keep the workmans' soul and body together.

It is impossible not to perceive, in all this, the injurious effect of the principle to which we have already, more than once, alluded, as the actual *regulator* of Political Economy in Great Britain, namely, *self-interest*. Viewed according to the light of

this principle, it was perfectly natural for those who were at once landlords and law-makers, to secure to themselves the largest amount of rents; and to throw off, on others, the weight of every public burthen. In former times, the system presented the resources of the poor, from the very land which produced the crop. But now, the whole crop is claimed for the benefit of the landlord; and the tax, for the support of the poor, is to be gathered, not from those who grow the wheat, but from those who eat the bread;—that is to say, in every nine cases out of ten, from the laboring classes themselves. Thus the laboring classes of England are placed as in a cleft stick, between capitalists and landlords, and feel the effects of pressure from both sides;—from the one side, in the reduction of wages; and from the other, in the increased prices of food.

The consequence now is, that in that country, including the three kingdoms, there is poverty and distress, such as cannot be found in the civilized world besides. In other countries there is less of aggregate wealth; but in no nation is there to be found so much, or such intense, misery, as among the poor of England. Nothing can show this more fully than the official reports made, from time to time, by order of Parliament, on their condition. Leaving the condition of the agricultural laborers aside, the reports on the condition of laborers in mines and manufactories, present a picture of physical and moral destitution, such as it is appalling to contemplate. We read, for instance, of children's being employed from the age of seven years and upward. And why is this? Because a child is as good as an adult person in waiting on the evolutions of machinery. Now the wages of a child is less than that of a man, and interest whispers to the employer, to give the child the preference. It matters not, that the delicate limbs of such beings are unable to support their bodies during the long hours of labor. It matters not that they become deformed, and contract physical maladies, which will accompany them through the remainder of their wretched lives. These things go on—for interest so determines it—until Parliament is at length obliged to pass enactments to interdict such outrages on the rights of childhood.

It is quite honorable to the feelings of the English people that they should sympathize in the sufferings of those who are in the condition of slaves throughout the world. But while her gaze can extend across the Atlantic; and while her honest and genu-

ine sympathy is often disgraced by the *cant* and fanaticism of those who would be its organs, surely it cannot be wrong for us to sympathize with those of her own population, whom avarice, or the interests of capital have buried in the bowels of the earth in her mining districts. Delicate women and tender children, as reported to Parliament, were found in the mines, *with harness fitted to them*, and obliged to drag loads on their hands and knees, after the manner of beasts. Passing from these again, to the pauper class, we see that the Public Economy directs their classification in a manner, such as, in some countries, would be regarded as a violation of the rights of human nature. The dearest ties—even those which constitute the last sweet drop, in the cup of poverty, are rudely disregarded and ruptured. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are separated from each other, and distributed in the establishments of public relief, as if they were malefactors, guilty of some social crime. Now, the worst feature in this system of Political Economy is, not precisely that the facts are so; but that the prejudices of the nation, like the principles of the science itself, as looking to individual interest as the life-spring of society, do not allow them even to conceive, that things ought to be otherwise. And so true is this, that according to the recognized principle, you may pass all the various members of society in review, and you will be unable to discover to whom the fault belongs; and in fact, according to the principle of self-interest, the fault belongs nowhere! Every man for himself.

It is the contemplation of all this, that has impelled many benevolent, but, as I conceive, mistaken persons, to conclude, that society in general is organized on a vicious principle. Individuals of this description have stood forth, in France, England, and this country also, flattering themselves with the hope of being able to withdraw some portion of their fellow beings from the miseries which they regard as essentially connected with the actual state of things. For this purpose, various schemes and schools of Political Economy have made their appearance, encouraging separate systems of private socialism, founded each on some favorite theory. These either have failed, or will fail; and principally for the reason that, while they have discovered the *self-interest* which operates so injuriously in the present systems, they have not discovered in those which they would substitute, any other principle of sufficient power to correct it. This can be done only through

a renovated faith, and a practical exercise of the virtues prescribed by religion. The tendency of society in general, at least in all that appertains to Political Economy, is in the opposite direction ; and there is but little hope that its course will be arrested until nations, as well as individuals, shall have been punished for their great social error.

How much ink has been shed in describing the evils which now press on the people, at least the laboring classes, of Great Britain ! How much of profound meditation has been employed, in vain efforts to find a solution for the social problem of that country ! And though many of her statesmen have begun to trace these evils back to their true cause, yet few have proclaimed the discovery, and fewer still have ventured to suggest the true remedy. Sometimes the evils are charged to one cause, sometimes to another. Now, it is the "restrictions on commerce ;" and now, it is an "excess of population over and above the wants of consumption." But no one has, as yet, contended for the true cause ; that is, the absence of a religious power which should be able to extend the obligation of *duties*, in exact proportion with the extension of *rights*. The social machine, in its relations to Political Economy, has been left to regulate itself, by the spring of mere individual interest ; and it is manifest that the weights and balances necessary to restore its equilibrium and to regulate its motion, cannot be adjusted except by the invocation of some *extrinsic* power, such as can be found in practical Christianity alone. The earth is not expected to furnish itself with light and heat : these come from the sun. So also, with regard to the practical Political Economy of modern nations—unless its lips be touched and purified with living coals from the altars of Divine Religion, it can never accomplish the entire purpose, according to which society is an institution of God. Any religion which can accomplish this—whatever may be the truth or the error of its other dogmas, will have rendered essential service to humanity. It is on this account that Political Economy, as a science, appears to me inadequate and defective. It would be more complete, and certainly more exalted, if, instead of regarding man as the mere "producer" and "consumer" of material wealth, it took cognizance of his intellectual, moral, and religious nature. It may, however, be objected, that these faculties, being spiritual and not material, have nothing to do with the subject. This seems to me an unfounded conclusion. The ancient Persians, for instance, held, as a reli-

gious opinion, that anything which could defile the waters of the ocean was sinful. Here, then, is an important branch of Political Economy—maritime commerce—affected by a religious conviction! After the expulsion of the missionaries from Japan, the Government of that country required that the merchants of Europe who wished to trade with its own, should, as a condition, *sine qua non*, trample on the emblem of Christianity, the cross. Holland, alone, agreed to the terms. Here, then, the absence of a religious conviction on the mind of one nation of Europe, affected the entire trade of Christendom with Japan! The calculations of revenue formed by Sir Robert Peel are founded on the most positive data of Political Economy; and yet, an idea—a moral idea—springing into the mind of a humble but excellent priest in Cork,* disturbs the Minister's conclusions, to the amount of between two and three millions of our currency, in the annual excise duties on one single article! Time does not permit me to enlarge on the proofs, or facts, going to show, that not only intellect and moral sentiment, but also the affections and virtues of the heart, have all of them an essential bearing on the subject.

In assuming the "importance of a Christian basis" for Political Economy, I did not indeed imagine, as you may easily conceive, that the system now so deeply and almost universally established, could be transferred to any other foundation than that on which it rests. But when I consider the *nature* of the evils which press upon so large a portion of modern society, it seems to me, that a preventive, if not a remedy, is discoverable in the Political Economy, (so to call it,) of the old Catholic Church. She had, preeminently, the faculty of guiding the affections and energies of mankind, in the direction most required by the actual wants of society in given times and circumstances. She differed from the modern religions, essentially on *one* great point; namely, that, while *they* teach that salvation is "by faith alone," and that good works have no merit, though they are provided for, as consequences of faith; *she* taught that they are to be concomitants of belief; that faith without works, is dead in itself; and that whatever good we do to one of the least of Christ's disciples, He will reward as if done to himself. This is the *turning point* of difference between the Political Economy of the Catholic Church, and that of the religions which have been substituted in

* Father Matthew.

its stead. Thus, she created an interest not to be estimated by the acquisition or exchange of material wealth, but by the consideration of advantages in the spiritual order and in the life to come. This doctrine, like the principle of life in the human body, vivified the spirit, and influenced the actions of all her members. Besides, she conceived human nature as having been *exalted and ennobled* through the Incarnation and Redemption, by the Son of God. Hence she valued human beings according to the high dignity of their ransom, irrespective of wealth or poverty? She has, indeed, been reproached with the tendency to abridge the rights of men. But the explanation of this is to be found, in the fact, that the inherent selfishness of fallen humanity, prompts them to claim injurious immunities; while, as she conceived, her office was to apportion *duties* according to the means which Providence furnished for the discharge of them. Men are prompt to assert their rights; but prone to forget that every right is accompanied with a corresponding duty. To every class and condition she assigned its own peculiar range of Christian obligation. To Sovereigns and Legislators, those of justice and mercy in the enactment and execution of laws. To the rich, moderation in enjoyment, and liberality toward the poor. To the poor, patience under their trials, and affection toward their wealthier brethren. Toward all, the common obligation of loving one another, not in word, but in *deed*. Neither was this by a uniform development of the principles of the Christian doctrine from the pulpit alone, but by a rigid process of self-examination and self-accusation, which was incumbent on every individual, when preparing for the Sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist. Here, the lawgiver, the landlord, the capitalist, and the laborer—all men of all classes—were required to stand at least once a year *judgment upon themselves*, in the presence of God and of his minister.

Far be it from me to insinuate or assert, that these great leading duties are not set forth to the people by the religions which have taken the place of the Catholic faith in Great Britain. But I think it will be evident that, in them all, there are wanting the means for their practical inculcation. First, because the paramount motive has been utterly destroyed by rejecting the “merit of good works,” and proclaiming “salvation by faith alone.” It is, indeed, alleged that, by a higher motive still, works, as the consequence, or fruits, or evidence, of faith, are provided

for. But still, those who enjoin works of this kind, since they declare them to be of "no merit" in the sight of God, seem to pull down with one hand what they have built up with the other. Besides this, in the new system of religion, every man claims to be the judge of his moral duties, as well as of his religious faith. Thus you perceive that the only motives left, as inducements for the performance of good works, in this system, are essentially of the *human* and *temporal* order. Now the manifestations of these fundamental principles are obvious, in the social developments under the influence of the two religions. Of its consequences, in the one case, the preceding remarks of this lecture are a sufficient exhibition. Rights are claimed—interests are prosecuted—every one that can, throws the burthen from himself. Each is the judge of his own moral and social duties—and self-love blinds him against what would require the sacrifice of his material interests, even if religion presented any adequate motive for making that sacrifice. Wealth is accumulating enormously on one side—poverty, deep and distressing, spreads on the other;—England is the richest, and the poorest country on the globe; and where, or to whom, belongs the guilt of this social anomaly, no man can determine!

The type of the other doctrine has developed itself in those principles and institutions which incur the censure, and sometimes the hatred, even of those who are the victims of their overthrow. If they were errors in religion, it is the more to be regretted, as they would have been blessings in Social, if not in Political Economy. They would have been, first of all, a merciful resource for the condition of the poor, which now constitutes the great *puzzle* of Political Economists, throughout the three kingdoms. The interests of man—taking in his spiritual nature and his eternal destiny—would be surveyed from a high and holy eminence. And when the rich man gave, of his abundance, to the needy, he would be acting, not *against*, but according to this principle of *Christian* interest. When the prince or the noble, moved by the "*Amor Jesu nobilis*," descended from his elevated position, to put on the sandals, the garment, and the girdle of religious poverty, in some monastic order, he understood, perfectly well, what he was about—comprehended the advantage of the step; and, whether he was mistaken or not, his determination was of infinite importance to the condition of the destitute. He became poor from a religious motive, having first, perhaps, given his property to the relief of

the class to whose condition he attached himself. He became their mediator with the rich—his own example had a powerful influence on them—he represented the necessity of alms-deeds—he spoke of their common Saviour, as having, in his own person, selected the condition of poverty; and reminded them that whatever they did for their suffering brethren, was done for Christ.

It was by the spirit of this doctrine of good works, that hospitals and asylums for the afflicted, sprang, as if spontaneously, into existence, in all parts of Great Britain, as well as of other European countries. It was by this that every kind of social evil, whether in physical suffering or in moral destitution, found whole armies of *volunteers*, ready to go in the face of pestilence and death, and this without human recompense, to counteract its ravages. It was by this, that individuals were constantly found ready to devote themselves to every species of good works.

The question in connection with this subject, is not whether these individuals were acting under a genuine principle of christianity or not—but it is, whether their devotion had any bearing upon the Political Economy of the country. That it had, is in my mind, beyond dispute. Firstly: In such a state of things, no poor law would be necessary. Secondly: The burthen of their support would not be regarded *as* a burthen, but *as* a privilege, and would fall on individuals in the rank of landlords and capitalists, instead of laborers as at present. Thirdly: The expense of supporting the poor would not be increased by the enormous sums which are paid to state officers, in that department. Fourthly: The ecclesiastical revenues, which have now quite a different direction, would be applied to that purpose. Fifthly: But besides all this, the influence of the doctrine I have alluded to, would infuse a spirit of gentle kindness into the treatment of the poor, which would leave no room for those dark and bitter passions against society, with which their breasts are now, too often, agitated; for it is a shocking feature of our times, that distinguished writers on Political Economy, have gone so far, as to maintain that poverty when it reaches the point of destitution ought to be treated *as* “infamy,” in order to make the struggle for self support of the sinking laborer “honorable.”

If this reasoning, and these reflections be correct we see what has been the cause of the prevailing distress; and what would have been the preventive or the remedy. And in either case, the great social calamity which is every day becoming more and more

formidable, in the estimation of British statesmen and political economists, instead of being, as it now is, apparently irremediable, would never have existed at all.

Some may imagine that in following out this subject, my judgment has been warped by a natural partiality for the religion to which I belong. This is, indeed, possible; but I can only say, that if it be true, I am entirely unconscious of it. Neither, at the present day, are these views peculiar to Catholics; a declaration briefly uttered, among others, by a distinguished Protestant statesman, Lord John Manners, expresses a similar conclusion, when he says, "that the re-establishment of the monasteries which have been destroyed, can alone provide a suitable remedy for the condition of the poor."

What, we may now ask, would be the influence of the Political Economy of the ancient Church, on the class of society immediately next above pauperism? Of this, we may judge by the fact already noticed, that during its prevalence, the English laborer could exchange a day's work for four or five times the quantity of food, which a day's labor will now bring. But what, it may be asked, had the doctrines of the Church to do with a result like this? They had simply this: that from principles already referred to, her policy, if I can use the expression, was directed to, or at least, resulted in, two consequences;—one was, to keep up the value of labor; the other, to keep down the price of bread. Both of these objects were included in the economy of religious festivals, which gave increased value to labor, by diminishing the amount of production. Rich and poor, assembled on an equality around the altars. Those days furnished leisure for the poor to be instructed, at least, in their Christian hopes and duties; as well as to repose from toil. The ceremonies of the Church—the grandeur and beauty of its architecture—the works of painting, and art, and music, which could be enjoyed within its walls—exercised a refining influence on their feelings and manners, in the absence of that popular education which the multiplication of books and the improvements in knowledge have since so much facilitated. It is to be observed, however, to those who understand no more of the subject, than the silly charge that, "the Church in all this encouraged idleness," a more unfounded imputation could scarcely be conceived. The principle of the Church, on that subject, may be seen in the rules of her religious orders. In these, you will find time so distributed, as to allow periods for labor—for reading—prayer—repose—but not one moment for idleness. It is to be remembered, also, that these holidays, in no way, interfered with the crops or productions of the earth. For, not only was labor allowed, but in many cases, absolutely enjoined, even on Sundays, when the inclemencies of the season endangered the productions of the earth.

What then was the result in the light of Political Economy? Simply that which was most important for the consideration of the laboring classes. The evils of over-production were provided against; and thus, the value and adequate price of labor, were maintained. Had this system been continued, seasons of rest would have been provided for, and regularly distributed, at intervals, throughout the year. But these days were abolished: and after capitalists had realized the advantages of the change, its rebound fell, with terrible effect, upon the laborers. Even at reduced wages, they have to encounter seasons when employment is denied for weeks and months. And why is this? It is from over-production;—the very evil which the economy of the Church, in the observance of holidays, was calculated to prevent. In the actual condition of the laborers, the want of employment is synonymous with the want of food; and when the cry of distress rings in the ears of their rulers, it is too often ascribed to other, than the real causes. The author of the “*Essay on Population*,” Malthus, startled Europe with the theory, that mankind increases in a ratio disproportioned to the means of their support. He maintained that, inasmuch as population increases in a geometrical ratio, and the agricultural productions of the earth, only in an arithmetical degree; therefore, a time must come, when the excess of the former, over the amount of the latter, would require that a large portion of the human race should perish! In this, there is some ground to believe, that he was misled by confounding the excess of “production” with excess of “population.” If the island of Great Britain were the only agricultural soil on the globe; then, indeed, with its present population, his theory might be correct. But the earth is teeming with fertility, which the industry of man has not yet turned to account. If the interested policy of England allowed other nations to send their surplus agricultural produce, in fair exchange, for her industrial fabrics, there would be no need for the invention of this theory. It is estimated that the valley of the Mississippi, alone, could furnish the staple of life for a population of one hundred and twenty-five millions. And yet the genius of Political Economy, in England, was such as to conceal this fact from the mind of Malthus. And instead of allowing the bread of that valley to reach the hungry operatives of Manchester;—in other words, instead of diminishing the material interests of the British landholder, he allowed himself to be thrown on the horrible alternative of recommending, as a prospective remedy, that the increase of population should, as much as possible, be prevented by restraints on the marriage of the poor. But what is more surprising still, is, that his theory should have been received with approbation by distinguished writers on Political Economy. Indeed, so far is this true, that the doctrine is now boldly asserted, that in reality the pauper has no more right to quarter himself on the public for support, than the rich man:—that if he be so supported, it is owing to the humanity of the public, but not due, as a right, to his condition. The

universal doctrine prevalent is, that every man has "a right to do what he pleases with his own;"—consequently, that, unless compelled by law, he has a right to refuse relief from his property, and leave the sufferer to die! When Sir Robert Peel, on a late occasion, declared in Parliament, that property had "duties as well as rights," the sentiment was reechoed by the press, with one chorus of astonishment; as if an axiom of morals, as old as the Christian Religion, were a recent discovery made by the minister.

But, supposing we admit the correctness of the conclusion at which Malthus arrived, how awful and retributive is the vindication which it furnishes of the social economy of the Church in the sanctioning of voluntary celibacy! The nation that denounced celibacy when it was a voluntary choice, in the clergy and in the monastic institutions, are reduced to the necessity of recommending the *enforcement of it* by compulsion, in regard to the poor. If that institution had continued, how great would have been the public economy in the support of the clergy! One twentieth part of the revenues of the Church at the present time, would be sufficient to support a single, that is, unmarried clergyman, in the proportion of one to every one thousand souls of the population. If it be said, that the ecclesiastical revenues return to the people, through some other channel, a better condition would be that nineteen-twentieths of it should not have been taken from them at all. But even the economy would not be the only advantage. The influence of such a ministry of religion, acting in a moral direction, could not but produce the happiest effects, among that portion of mankind who are compelled to toil daily for the means of subsistence. Their pleasures would be of a more rational, more elevating, and, at the same time, more economical description. Their feelings and manners would be softened and improved, by the influence of religion and frequent intercourse with its ministers. Their moral faculties would be cultivated; and, if the trials of life bore heavily upon them, religion would still be near, to console them with the promised hopes and joys of another world.

As it is, their condition, in all these respects, is exceedingly deplorable. We may take a few of the answers given to the commissioners to establish this point. The following are given in a late number of the *Edinburgh Review*, as specimens of the "general ignorance" and moral destitution:

"*Ann Egglely*, aged eighteen. 'I am sure I don't know how to spell my name. I don't know my letters. I went a little to a Sunday-school, but soon gave it over. I walk about and get fresh air on Sundays. I never go to church or chapel. I never heard of Christ at all; nobody has ever told me about him, nor have my father and mother ever taught me to pray. I know no prayer. I never pray. I have been taught nothing about such things.'—APP. PART 1, p. 252.

"*Eliza Coats*, aged eleven. 'I do naught on Sundays. I do n't know

where I shall go if I am a bad girl. I never heard of Jesus Christ. I think God made the world, but I don't know where God is.'—*Ibid.*

"*William Cruchilow*, aged sixteen. 'I can read the Bible—go to school five nights in the week. I don't know anything of Moses. Never heard of France. I don't know what America is. Never heard of Scotland nor Ireland. Can't tell how many weeks there are in a year. There are twelve pence in a shilling, and twenty shillings in a pound. There are eight pints in a gallon of ale.'

"*Edward Whitehead*, aged fifteen. 'I go to church three times on Sundays. I do not know where Birmingham is, nor where London is. I never heard of Ireland; I have seen Irishmen.'

"*William Butler*, aged nineteen. 'I go to church on Sundays. I read the Testament, and sometimes in the Bible, but no other book. I can say my catechism. We sometimes work a few hours at a time. When there is no sale, we get no money, but only ale, when we leave at eleven. I generally get drunk on such occasions.'

"*Peter Dale*, aged twelve. 'I have been to Sunday-school, and can read nicely in a spelling-book (he had been to school about two years.) Jesus Christ was God's Son; he was n't born at all; he was nailed to a cross; he came to save sinners; sinners are bad men, that dranked and swore, and lied. I think there are sinners on earth now. If I am a good boy, and try to please him, I shall go to Jesus—if not, I shall go to hell. I don't know what disciples were rulers; they did nothing wrong; can't tell who the apostles were. Four times five is twenty; five times six is twenty-eight. I never heard what's the biggest town in England. Scotland is a town, isn't it, sir? I go to chapel as well as school. I never go larking on Sundays.'—APP. PART I, p. 250."

That these cannot be considered as isolated cases, of what the reviewers call the "general ignorance," may be inferred from another official statement: viz., that of 467,894 marriages of all classes, in England and Wales, within the last three years; 303,836 of the persons thus married, were unable to write their own names.

Such are the results of Political Economy, as based on the principle of individual material interest. It might possibly suffice, if the means of protecting—each his own interest—were *equal* in the hands of all. But what chance have the poor against the rich? the weak against the strong, under such a system? When all the social elements of material industry, of consumption, production, capital and labor, wealth of nations in general, *all* resolve themselves, by common consent and established usage, into mere personal selfishness? Could any other result have been reasonably expected, by men who understand the feelings and passions of poor fallen nature? And what remedy can be applied now? Alas! whatever remedy either wisdom or philanthropy might suggest, will come too late for many of the victims that are sinking under this state of things. And it is feared, even by wise men, that they will lead, at no remote pe-

riod, if they continue on, to some social catastrophe, such as one shudders to think of. Unquestionably, in the system itself, there are elements for mitigating these miseries. But the measures for that purpose can only be presented in the aggregate of *abstract* interest, and are still violently opposed by the selfishness of coteries, and of individuals who have power to resist them. The only way to apply a corrective to the *root* of the evil, would be, not indeed to destroy the principle of interest, but to enlarge it, to an extent corresponding with the whole nature and destiny of man, as made known through the lessons of our Divine Redeemer. Bring *temporal* interests into harmony with *spiritual*—infuse some portion of the attributes of God, justice and mercy, into the minds and hearts of princes, of legislators, of nobles, of landlords; yea, if possible, of capitalists and money-changers themselves, as the *Christian* rules, for their thoughts and actions toward the weaker classes of their countrymen. Persuade them, not only that there *is* a God in heaven, but also, that He is the common Father of all, rich and poor; that they ought to love each other. Bring their hearts nearer to each other—unite and bind them together, not only as citizens of the same country, but also as aspirants to the same immortal life, and eternal glory. Any effort toward this, will be a step in the great cause of society and of human nature. All this the Church would have done, without seeming to spend a thought upon it, if you had allowed her to continue the peaceful mission with which her Founder sent her forth to the nations of the earth. In times of barbarism she was the means of erecting for your forefathers, a noble and majestic social edifice, sufficiently ample to shield and protect them all. She would have enlarged, improved, and adorned it, in proportion to your increasing numbers, and the varying wants of your condition. But you overthrew this, and built for yourselves an incongruous and misshapen structure. You are fain to call it a social edifice! But no: its true name is a temple of interest. Princes, and lords, and capitalists, are indeed well provided for, beneath its glittering arches—a few others still, may find protection within its vestibule; but as for you, oh ye millions of the poor and laboring classes, who are called and compelled to worship at its shrine, ye are strewn around its outer porches; and, instead of its sheltering you from the storm, and the rains of adversity, you are even drenched with the waters that descend from its roof. Go back among the ruins of former things, you may still find and trace out, the deep foundations of the better edifice you destroyed. And, if there be no other hope for you, co-operate with Divine Religion in rearing up its stately walls, and its capacious dome, beneath which, even as regards your temporal condition, you, or at least the heirs of your condition, your children, may yet find shelter and protection.

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